

The Jewish *Gaily Forward*

"Transcend the Ordinary"

Kislev 5781 - Adar 5781
December 2020 - February 2021



Staying Grounded / By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND

As we enter the Chanukah season, we also begin the fourth season of our sheltering. The days shorten. Twinkling lights blink at us on our street corners to bring some glitter into the darkness. We have been bracing ourselves for the cold this year in a different way, knowing it would push us back indoors. This year of sheltering has been a constant lesson in adjusting to change. After getting somewhat accustomed to greeting people outside at a distance, finding rhythm in moving outside when the air allows, we pivot once again. We pray for, and welcome, any rain we might receive while we know that as it arrives we will need to search for new blessings in our lives.

How do we ground ourselves, when that ground keeps shifting? I've been fascinated to read over the past months what health care experts suggest to keep ourselves centered during this pandemic. Here are some recurring themes:

- Ritual and routine are key. Creating a rhythm in our boundless days helps us cope with the monotony and stress that can overwhelm us.
- Bring music into your life. We know that our souls are moved by music, and chemicals are released in our bodies that elate us, bring calm and stress relief when we play, sing, or even listen to music.
- Practice gratitude. For big things, for small things. Expressing gratitude doesn't negate pain, loss, or uncertainty. We can experience all of these emotions simultaneously.
- Connect to others and to something larger than yourself.

One study conducted at the height of the lockdown showed that membership in a religious community significantly impacted individuals' mental health. Even when people couldn't enter their place of worship they reported better mental health and less loneliness than their counterparts. When I read these what-to-do lists, I am struck by how connection to our community has lifted us up (including me) during this time. When we connect ourselves deeply to a community like ours, we feel less alone, less overwhelmed, more able to find strength to face the challenges in our lives, and more likely to feel we are part of something bigger than ourselves, a larger web of life on this planet.

As we navigate our constantly shifting reality, I am grateful to be bringing in the light of Chanukah with you.

**Volunteer
Focus - pg.8**

Creating a Bright Future at Chanukah

By MARC LIPSCHUTZ



The nation has been in crisis and the government has not promoted our values. The education of our children has been disrupted and we have been fearful to leave our homes. We have not been able to enter our house of worship and we have lost our national moral compass and identity.

These were our circumstances 2187 years ago in the Land of Israel, when a Hellenistic government outlawed Jewish religious practice, education, and cultural expression, and prohibited our entry to the Beis HaMikdash, the Holy Temple. During that national upheaval, the visionary Maccabees strategized and endeavored to co-create a bright Jewish future, and were successful beyond all expectations. Within two years, the Beis HaMikdash was rededicated, the government promoted public safety and welfare, and the first Chanukah lights of justice triumphed.

Today our Sha'ar Zahav house of worship remains closed and dark. Nevertheless, through the shared vision and committed endeavors of our dedicated rabbi, cantor, teachers, and staff,

through your active participation and volunteerism, and through the help of HaShem, we are prevailing and indeed thriving as a caring, connected, and vibrant Jewish community. And while living with unpredictability, we are journeying toward a bright new Chanukah.

Your Sha'ar Zahav Reopening Task Force is committed to a safe and inclusive reopening, following the creation and distribution of an effective vaccine and treatment, and significantly reduced new COVID diagnoses. During the interim, we are carefully evaluating the safety of possible limited and distanced outdoor gatherings, while ensuring your welfare.

What will be our Sha'ar Zahav congregational experience when we reopen? What lessons have we learned from the pandemic that can be actualized to enhance our physical and spiritual growth? What new amenities will Sha'ar Zahav provide to you? What are the goals toward which we must strive? Where do we want to arrive post-pandemic, and what do we want to achieve? Will we become a hybrid physical and online Jewish community? To answer these questions, I will convene a Strategic Planning Task Force. Through a new congregational survey we will solicit your opinions, identify your needs, and strategically plan our future. (Continued on page 9)

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Meet Liliana Peliks

MANAGER of COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION



When I moved to San Francisco in 2008, my life changed. I was aware a change was underway, but all my guesses were far from what I have experienced in this diverse city, and how lucky I am!

In a little over 11 years, I have immersed myself in meaningful non-profit work, started a family, launched two businesses, ran some crazy relay races, birthed a pandemic, and became a Jewish professional. Oy!

I have no doubt my work at Sha'ar Zahav will lead to more personal and professional adventures. But what I really hope is that it gives me the opportunity to play a part in adding meaning to your lives, and if I am really lucky, a whole new community to call my own.

Liliana Peliks

(She/hers/her, and for my family, ella, ela and ima)

(L to R - Noa Peliks, Hannah Peliks, Liliana and Naldo Peliks)

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Meeting Each Moment at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer

By SUE BOJDAK, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Not long before COVID-19 arrived, our Education Committee met for a half-day retreat to develop a value proposition for Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer, guided by Liliana Peliks, our new Manager of Community Engagement & Administration. The goal was to succinctly capture the essence of our program

and create a shared language with which to invite others into our community. Here is our statement:

Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer is a Jewish Learning Program for children in kindergarten through 7th grade whose families are seeking to come as they are and create their own pathway to Judaism with their children.

The program is designed to create rich educational opportunities to support children discovering what it means to engage with Judaism personally with authenticity, and collectively with respect and joy. Our project-based, intimate learning community partners with parents to develop their children's identities within a diverse Jewish community that is grounded in unconditional love and social justice.

Immediately following our first draft and through our continued conversations about how best to capture the wholeness/holiness of our magical community, we began wrestling with how to navigate COVID time. In the beginning I imagined we could shift our learning to be home-based with a little Zoom and finish the year's curriculum. Quickly we realized that we needed something different. We needed space to connect, opportunities to have feelings, and room to play and be together without learning outcomes.

As luck would have it we were studying Jewish migrations through history and the amazing cultural diversity that results from our extensive diaspora. Our driving question was, "Where is Home?" So we kept our question and shifted our exploration to a more intimate, immediate experience of being at home. Now we were engaging Judaism "personally with authenticity."

Once we were studying from home, people really started "to come as they are." In pajamas, with pancakes, in busy kitchens and tucked into blankets. Our "pathways to Judaism" now ran through Zoom into each other's houses and back to our own couches.

Collectively we created joy together as we adapted our morning prayer circle to sloppy Zoom singing with deep cleansing breaths. One parent described our circle time as their spiritual touchstone keeping them sane as a parent and a person through this impossible time. We continued to create this sacred virtual space for weeks after school was over, playing, creating and nurturing one another through prayer and learning.

Our plan for Beit Sefer this fall has been "grounded in unconditional love" as we have crafted a set of learning opportunities designed to lovingly meet the diverse needs of each child and each family. Anchored by our weekly circle time, we are offering group gatherings by grade, one-one learning, @home family learning boxes, outdoor meetups, and loving acceptance for those who need to step back and make their lives simpler in this time.

It turns out our value proposition isn't just helping us describe ourselves to others, it's grounding us in who we are even as we reshape ourselves to meet each moment.

Violet Gluck



Violet Gluck, daughter of Christine Young and David Gluck, will be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on January 9. If this were an ordinary year, Violet would have been a seventh grader at Roosevelt Middle School; instead, with social

distancing the priority, Violet is receiving a home-school education under the mentorship of her father. Her favorite subjects at home include conceptual physics and JavaScript programming; she is also a voracious reader, and an avid fan of Greek mythology. Violet's top extra-curricular interests are Taekwondo (she holds the rank of black belt) and hip hop and modern dance.

At this moment, Violet's career ambition is to use science as a means of tikkun olam -- building on her experience leading a team of sixth graders to represent her school in the Salesforce Trailblazer Challenge, where their proposal to "seed bomb" the Amazon Rainforest won the top prize among the sixty middle schools in the competition.

Violet also comes from a theatrical family, and between the ages of 7-9, she performed more than 100 times in the hit immersive theatre show "The Speakeasy." And as a fourth grader, Violet won a city-wide bookmaking competition with her short story, "Sadness At Its Best." Despite her many accomplishments, the thing Violet loves most is goofing around with her neighborhood friends, and just being a kid.

Violet and her family would like to thank her mentor Laura Trupin, her drash mentor Beth Ross, Sue Bodjak, and Andy Fyne for all their support.

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Bernice Frantz, Jack Katz and Payah Prochovnick

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21 Zoom Service sponsored by Jonathan Funk
 in honor of the 50th anniversary of his bar mitzvah

SEPTEMBER

4 Zoom Service sponsored by Anonymous
 in honor of wonderful and amazing women

OCTOBER

2 Zoom Service sponsored by James Carlson
 in memory of Arthur Carlson
 and Filippo Tuzzolino

9 Zoom Service sponsored by Ira Hirschfield
 in memory of Lois Hirschfield

23 Zoom Services sponsored by
Daniel Loftus and Christopher Nguyen
 in celebration of the naming
 of Naya Loftus Nguyen

525,600

By JAMES CARLSON

Yes, that's the number of minutes in a year, made famous by the musical *Rent*. It's also the number of volunteers required to successfully engage our community in the Zoom version of CSZ's High Holy Day celebration. Or so it seemed.

We are very indebted to the clergy. There was a huge question mark about whether we would be able to deliver a meaningful spiritual experience this year. The clergy answered that question mark with a resounding YES. Rabbi Copeland and Cantor Bernstein devoted countless hours to creating segments of prayer that were specially designed for a Zoom platform. It was infeasible to merely update a prior year's outline; every service had to be conceived freshly. The end products were enormously successful.

Our normal contingent of volunteers when we're at the Herbst is substantial. The unusual requirements this year presented a real challenge, because – unlike many Bay Area congregations – Sha'ar Zahav's services were 100% live. We had no pre-recorded sessions. That feat was made possible by the expertise of 18 technical gabbaim who kept our Zoom services crisp and seamless. We owe them a great deal of gratitude. A special pair of shout-outs go to Ann Bauman and Geri Kahn who teamed up to coordinate the logistics and kavod (honor) assignments. Their plans were multi-layered. They understood the necessity to have many more contingency options this year in an untested environment, and they recruited the volunteers to fill those slots.

We had a new volunteer opportunity this year that came about with the decision to assemble gift bags. It was such a sweet idea to ensure that members had honey and apples to start 5781, and a logistic challenge to distribute. It was another example of a new challenge that we surmounted. Perhaps the greatest challenge was the one every member faced in the unusual aspect of participating in our most sacred moments over Zoom. It stands as a hallmark of our community that facing tough circumstances, we rethink what's possible, we volunteer, and we make it happen.

HHD Committee

Ann Bauman
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Tony Harris
Jo Ellen Green Kaiser
Marc Lipschutz
Mike Shriver
Martin Tannenbaum

Volunteers HHD 2020

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Yvette Adida
Mike Athanasatos
Carey Averbook
Andrew Berger
Ray Bernstein
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Larry Wexler
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SHA'AR ZAHAV MAZEL TOV TO

AUGUST

- **Annie and Tyler Atura Bushnell**
on the birth of Dorothea Cyan.
- **Joe and Anna Harkman**
on the birth of Lionel Sol.
- **Sophie Rinkoff-Murland**
on graduating from nursing school.

SEPTEMBER

- **Daniel Loftus and Christopher Nguyen**
on the birth of Naya.

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONDOLENCES

AUGUST

- 6 Kenneth Lotney,**
father of Karlyn Isaac Lotney
- 10 Barbara Caplan,**
mother of Patty Caplan,
mother-in-law of Jonathan Simonoff
and grandmother of Emma and Jason Simonoff

SEPTEMBER

- 9 David Lubeck,**
father of Susan Lubeck,
father-in-law of Richard Weiner
and grandfather of Raphael Lubeck-Weiner

(September Continued)

- 10 Robert and Michael Fenstersheib,**
brother and nephew of Martin Fenstersheib

OCTOBER

- 2 Stuart Klein,**
uncle of Larry Best
- 19 Edis Robinson,**
mother of Nathan Robinson and Jacob Robinson
- 19 Marcia Burney,**
sister of David Wasserman
and sister-in-law of Neil Hart

SHA'AR ZAHAV PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued from Page 2)

2185 years ago, a little cruse of oil provided eight nights of light beyond all expectations, which reminds us at Sha'ar Zahav this Chanukah of our own unlimited potential. With your help, the help of our Strategic Planning Task Force, and the help of

HaShem, we will envision and chart our path forward, identify our opportunities, operationalize our goals, reopen with celebratory and rededicated joy, and co-create our bright Sha'ar Zahav future.

DECEMBER

Nicholas Papadopoulos
David Glassberg
Norman David Kramer
Walter Palmer
Elijah Michael Silverrod MacLachlan
Allan Craig
Phyllis Mintzer

JANUARY

Aaron Nacamulli
Gerald (Jerry) Rosenstein
Ben Blachman
Jerome Davis
Richard C Wilson
Keith Fenton
George Ash
Cheryl Orvis
Bill Ashley-Dobbin
Nathan Eli Weinstein

FEBRUARY

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Stephen Walters
John Atteridg
Ziggy Gimnicher
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Ronald Wilmot
Barbara Rosenblum
Batya Kalis
Rabbi Sanford Lowe
Leland Vogel
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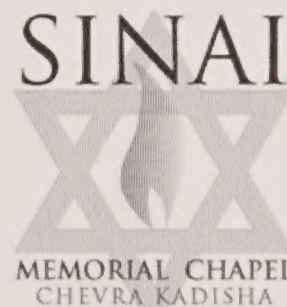
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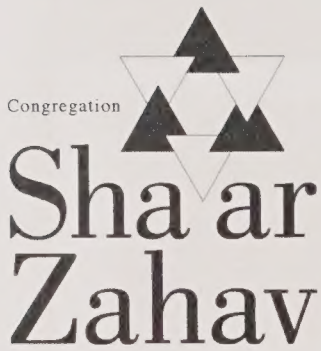
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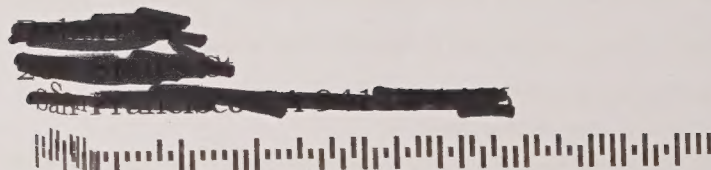
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Chanukah: Let There Be Light!

Thursday, December 10 to Thursday, December 17

**Nightly candle lighting followed by
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Each night will be led by a different community
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storytelling, to art, to yoga. *Open to everyone.*

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